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3 of 5

No Man's Land

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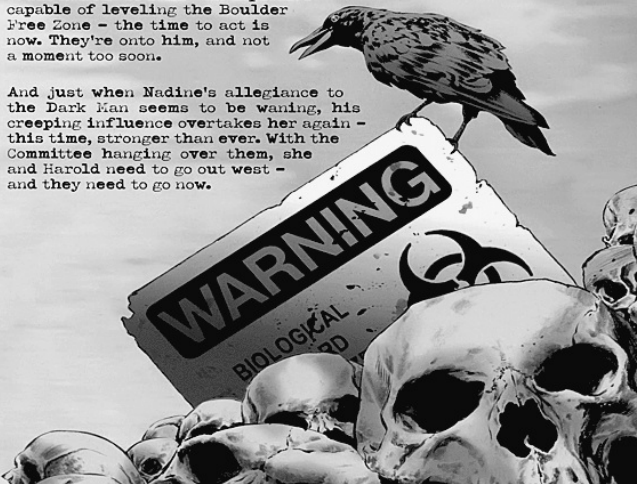
PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND

Two months ago, something happened at Project Blue in California. Within weeks, a flu-like virus—"Captain Trips"—swept through the world, killing 99% of the population. Now, it's up to the survivors to piece together a new life in a world that has moved on.

The survivors in the Boulder Free Zone have begun to rebuild; an engineering committee has even gotten the generator up and running again. But as lights go on all around them, a mounting terror threatens to plunge them all back into darkness. Because though they've prepared for the impending clash with the Dark Man, the army he's been raising in Las Vegas is infinitely more dangerous. They're playing with fire, and it's only a matter of time before somebody gets burned.

Weeks ago, Franny discovered the ledger filled with Harold's darkest and most pernicious thoughts; separately, Larry did, too. Now Leo Rockaway - these days teetering between the thoughtful Leo and the feral Joe - brings them together to stop Harold's plan from moving into its next phase. With just one day until Harold detonates his crude homemade bomb - an explosive capable of leveling the Boulder Free Zone - the time to act is now. They're onto him, and not a moment too soon.

And just when Nadine's allegiance to the Dark Man seems to be waning, his creeping influence overtakes her again - this time, stronger than ever. With the Committee hanging over them, she and Harold need to go out west - and they need to go now.



**AUGUST THIRTIETH.
HAROLD'S BASEMENT.**

Nadine was
feeling...
uneasy.

Harold had disappeared into
that quiet, distant place of
his for the last few hours...



The same place, she surmised, where
he went to write in that ledger she'd
read--then replaced under the loose
hearthstone in the living room.



The insane place.

You know,
Nadine...

...maybe you
should take a
walk.



Why,
Harold?



Frankly, *ma chère*,
because I don't know
how old this dynamite is,
and old dynamite *sweats*,
and what it *sweats* is
pure nitroglycerin...



...so there's a chance this little science project could blow us all the way to Oz.

Well, you don't have to sound so snotty about it.



Suddenly, Nadine found herself wishing that the dynamite would blow up and put an end to them both. A--a merciful end.

Because, she'd come to realize, it wasn't just Harold who was Flagg's instrument of destruction. She was one, too.

She, who had once defined the single unforgiveable sin in the post-plague world as murder--

There...



...it's done.

Ready for delivery.



She wished she'd kissed Joe one last time.

Kissed him goodbye.

Will... will it work?



Would you like to try it and find out?

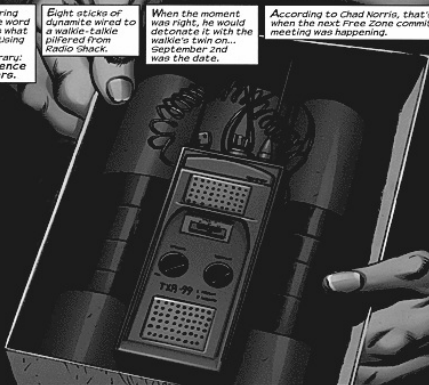
Nadine couldn't bring herself to say the word "bomb," but that's what Harold had made. Using a book from the Boulder Public Library: 65 National Science Fair Prize Winners.

Eight sticks of dynamite wired to a walkie-talkie pilfered from Radio Shack.

When the moment was right, he would detonate it with the walkie's twin on... September 2nd was the date.

According to Chad Norris, that's when the next Free Zone committee meeting was happening.

Well, do you?



Harold's tone was sarcastic, but Nadine welcomed it. That meant he was back from that godforsaken place. His talk was just talk again, and she could handle him.

Or...we could go upstairs and play for a bit.

Like we did last night.



...
Yeah, Okay.
Good.



September 2nd...

Harold could hardly wait...



LARRY'S HOUSE.

A week ago, when Nadine moved in with Harold, "thoughtful" Leo reverted to "Feral" Joe.

Since then, the boy had been inching back towards Leo, but he wasn't there yet, so Larry was concerned.

Hey, kiddo, you want to go fishing?

Leo/Joe had been bouncing that ping-pong ball for the last week--

No.
No fish.

The boy's eyes were dark and faraway. The way they'd been that time in front of Harold's house.

When, it seemed to Larry, Leo had been in a trance and--

--and had somehow known secret things...

Leo...
How's Nadine-mom?

She calls me Joe. I'm Joe to her.

It's bad now. Bad with them both.

A cold chill went its way up Larry's back...

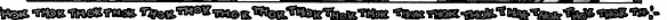
Talking to Leo when he was like this was like watching a graveyard tomb swing open and seeing a hand emerge--

Both?
Nadine and Harold?

He's got them fooled.

They think he wants them.

They're going to go west.



THE PARK.

An hour before dark, the crickets were chirruping, lovers were walking through the gathering gloom, and Larry and Frannie were meeting--

--on Leo's "advice," as Larry explained it.



Fran told Larry about Harold and his crush on her and how she believed he'd read her diary. Then it was his turn:

The night we met, remember I told you I'd been up in the barn you and Harold marked in Maine? And that he'd carved his initials on a beam in the loft?

Yes...



"It wasn't *just* his initials. It was yours, too. In a heart.

"The kind of thing a lovesick boy would do."



Ugh, what a mess...

I know everyone likes Harold now, you and Stu included, but...I'm afraid he bears Stu a grudge, Larry. Maybe the whole committee--



Larry...?

What is it? What are you thinking?





It makes
such
beautiful
sense...

Harold reads
your diary and
decides to keep
his own...

What are
you *talking*
about?

"When I went to visit Harold,
he went downstairs to get a
corkscrew or something, and I
found a ledger hidden under
a loose stone in the hearth.

"I didn't read it, but
I bet it was--"



Yes! The
day I *snuck*
in...

"...the day Nadine Cross almost
caught me, I sat on that hearth...
I *remember* that loose stone..."



As if something
had been leading
us *both* by the
nose...

Lord, it's like
we're living in a
fairy tale...

First an old
woman who's the
voice of God, now
a little boy who's
some kind of
telepath....



At the time, I thought the ledger could've belonged to the original owner of the house, full of his dirty secrets, but surely Harold would've found it, and why would he have kept someone else's dirty secrets hidden? Unless--



Unless they were Harold's secrets--

Written in Harold's journal--



The ledger could be long gone, Frannie... Or it might be nothing but a list of things to do... Perfectly innocent...

Or it could have Harold's master plan.

To hurt Stu...to take over the committee.



Well...

I think we should go look and see.



They would...investigate the next day, they decided, while Harold was out with the Burial Committee and Nadine was helping at the power station.

Until they knew something definitively, they wouldn't tell anyone about their suspicions.



Frannie felt lighter at heart than she had in weeks. The ledger might prove all her fears groundless. And if it didn't...



...let the committee decide what to do.

They would discuss it at the next meeting, on September 2nd.

What are you smiling about?



I'll tell you tomorrow night. I'll tell you everything that's been on my mind. Until then... no questions, okay?

THE NEXT DAY, SEPTEMBER 1st.

THE CONTROL ROOM OF THE BOULDER POWER STATION.

In attendance: Stu Redman, Nick Andros, Ralph Bretner, Glen Bateman, and engineer Brad Kitchner.



Hail Mary,
fulla grace, help
me win this stock
car race--

--Brad prayed, as he
yanked two switches
down hard.

In the cavernous hall below them, two generators serving
North Boulder began to whine. (Brad had said, "If something
goes wrong, I'd rather blow TWO generators than fifty-two.")

The assembled workers broke
out into spontaneous applause.

Above them,
the fluorescents
had begun to
glow.

Nick elbowed Stu. For him,
the feeling was the exact
opposite of the dread he
had known when the lights
went out in Shoyo--not one
of entombment now,
but of resurrection.

And all over
North Boulder...

TV sets went on in
blares of snow...

In a house on Spruce,
a blender whirled to
life, mixing a long-
congealed cheese-
and-egg mixture....

In a garage on Maple,
a power saw buzzed
sawdust from its
guts...

Stove burners
began to glow...

Marvin Gaye began to sing from the loudspeakers of an old record shop called the Wax Museum; the words seemed like a dream of the past come to life:

Let's dance...
let's shout...get
funky what it's
all about...

At the power station, one of the generators started to whine at a higher, more desperate note. It began to smoke, too...

Too high!
The bastard's
crossing over!
Overloading!

Get some
foam onto
that--

HUSTLE--

Once the crisis was over:

I'm sorry
it turned
out that way,
Brad.

Sorry?
What for?

The one generator
just overloaded. We're
in business, we just got to
go around Boulder and
turn off everything. We
forgot, is all!
We forgot!

People got sick,
they died, but they
didn't turn off their
electrical appliances
before they did! We
probably got
appliances on all
over Boulder, and
that's a hell
of a power
drain!

Matter of fact,
we better get some
folks over to North
Boulder fast, and
make sure it's not
burning down!

What most people in the Zone remembered about the first of September was that it was the day the power came back on, if only for 30 seconds or so.

Not Frannie and Larry, though.

They remembered it as the day they broke into Harold's house--and everything changed.

There's a good chance he's moved the ledger, anyway...

And Harold had. But Nadine had replaced it.

Well...are we going to admire it or read it?

You, Larry, I don't even wanna touch it.

They read:

It's Harold's way of saying following is as honorable as leading, I guess, but as a motto, it's not gonna replace "Waste not, want not"---

Whoa, look at this entry, Frannie!

She did; they did.

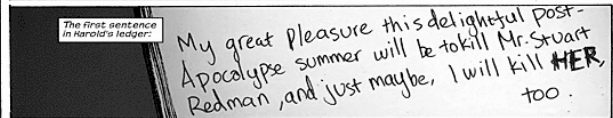
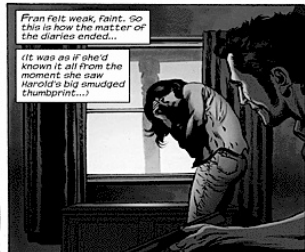
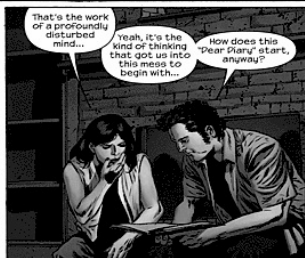
To follow one's star is to concede the power of some greater Force. YOUR GOD, your DEVIL, owns the keys to the lighthouse, but to each of us, he has given the responsibility of NAVIGATION ...

HAROLD EMERY LAURE

It is said that the two great human sins are pride and hate. Are they? I elect to think of them as the two great virtues. To give away pride and hate is to say you will charge for the good of the world. To vent them is more noble--that is to say the world must charge for the good of you. I am on a great adventure.

ROBERT HATE
+ STATE
SUCKER

UNHAPPY LAURE



MEANWHILE.

Ralph?
Ralph Bretner,
you home?

Yoo-hoo,
anybody
home?

*She had a story ready,
in case someone was home,
but didn't need it.*

*Nadine made her
way into the
living room...*

*Harold had told her they
would probably meet in
the living room.*

*And that, ideally, she should
plant their surprise in one of
the living room's closets.*

If I put it in
a closet, will it still
work? Won't the
extra wall muffle
the blast?

Nadine, this
device will take
out the house
and most of the
surrounding
hillside...

The extra
wall will become
shrapnel...

"A closet will be fine..."

"I trust your judgment..."

*She put the box on the
floor, amongst the boots
and scarves, and
covered it over again.*

She paused.

You're not going to leave that bomb in there, are you?

In a world where so many have died...

...the one great sin is to take a human life.



Then, she was on her Vespa, speeding away, doing her best to ignore the doubts. To not go mad.



At the corner of Baseline and Broadway, she paused, thinking she would go back to Ralph's and clip the wires that ran between the blasting caps and the walkie-talkie...



Which is when the blackness crept over her vision...

Like a dark curtain, slowly drawn, flipping and flapping in a mild breeze...

A foretaste of the horrors to come...



She became lost in the steady blackout...

She became blind, she became deaf, she was losing the sense of touch...





The thinking part of her, the Nadine-ego, was drifting in a warm, black cocoon, like seawater, or amniotic fluid...

And then she felt him creep into her...

Penetration: entropy.



It was like nothing she had felt before.

Later, metaphors to describe it occurred to her, but she rejected them:

You're swimming and suddenly, in the midst of warm water, you're treading water in a pocket of deep, numbing cold.

You've been given Novocain and the dentist pulls a tooth, painlessly. You can slip your tongue into the hole where part of you was living a second ago.

You stare at your face in the mirror for a long time, you watch as your face changes and you become a stranger to yourself, a Poppelganger.



It was really none of those things, but there was a taste-trace to all of them.

The Dark Man entered her, AND HE WAS COLD.



When Nadine opened her eyes (awoke?), her first thought was she was in hell.

And hell was white...
White-white-white...
Bleached-out
nothingness...

The Park Man had been in her
and brought her...where?

It took her a moment to
collect herself and realize:

A drive-in movie theater with
a huge, blank, white screen.



The darkness had come over her at Baseline
and Broadway, and now she was almost over
the town line in...Longmont, wasn't it?

(Far back in her mind,
there was a taste of
him, still. Like cold
slime on a floor.)



Why am
I here...?



It was only talking aloud,
she expected no answer,
but got one--

NADINE--

--and it was his voice,
pumping through the
dead speakers.





You've gone insane, she comforted herself. The strain of waiting, Harold's games, they've driven you over the edge, dear, and maybe that's for the best--

Stop it--

But she hadn't gone crazy; she knew--

This was far, far worse than being crazy--

NADINE, THEY KNOW--
YOU'VE BEEN STUPID--GOD MAY
LOVE STUPIDITY - BUT I DO NOT -



Stupid, she thought.
Stupid means DEATH.



THEY KNOW EVERYTHING
EXCEPT THE SHOEBOX
EXCEPT THE DYNAMITE

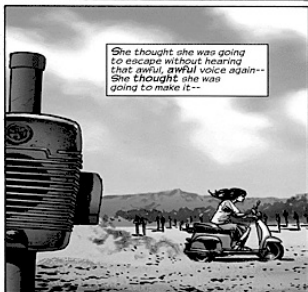
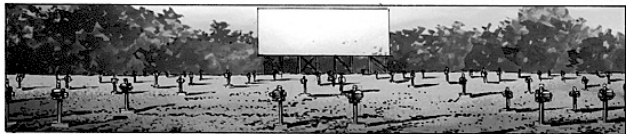


GO TO SUNRISE AMPHITHEATRE..

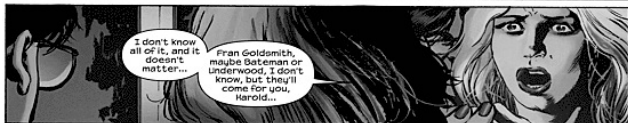
STAY THERE..

UNTIL TOMORROW NIGHT,
UNTIL THEY MEET..

...AND THEN YOU
AND HAROLD MAY COME,
COME TO ME...









A SELECTION OF PAGES FROM THIS ISSUE'S SCRIPT BY ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA

PAGE SIX.

PANEL ONE.

Establishing shot, later that day—dusk. It's a park in Boulder. Larry and Frannie are sitting side-by-side, on the edge of a bandshell stage. (NOTE: However you visualize this, Mike, we just have to make sure it looks completely different from where Nadine and Harold are going to be camping out—the amphitheatre.) Anyway, this is a very moody panel; Larry and Frannie can be in the background. In the foreground or middle-ground, we see a few couples strolling; some people packing up, getting ready to go home. Dusky, almost misty...

FLOATING TEXT: THE PARK.

CAPTION: An hour before dark, the crickets were chirruping, lovers were walking through the gathering gloom, and Larry and Frannie were meeting—

CAPTION:—on Leo's "advice," as Larry explained it.

PANEL TWO.

Focusing on our two players, Larry on the left, Frannie on the right. Both of them slowly piecing everything together, comparing stories, etc. Larry leading this strain of the conversation. It's all slotting into place now...

CAPTION: Fran told Larry about Harold and his crush on her and how she believed he'd read her diary. Then it was his turn:

LARRY: The night we met, remember I told you I'd been up in the barn you and Harold marked in Maine? And that he'd carved his initials on a beam in the loft?

FRAN: Yes...

PANEL THREE.

A flashback panel, Mike. That same panel we've seen a couple of times before. (Once in real time, then a second time in flashback—and now, again, a flashback.) Larry in that damn barn in Maine, stumbling across that wooden beam, which Harold has carved with his initials...and Frannie's initials...in a heart.

LARRY: "It wasn't just his initials. It was yours, too. In a heart."

LARRY: "The kind of thing a lovesick boy would do."

PANEL FOUR.

A panel focusing on Frannie, who has turned to look towards the left-hand side of the panel, towards the off-panel Larry. She is going through her own process here, struggling with her conflicted feelings...

FRAN: Ugh, what a mess...

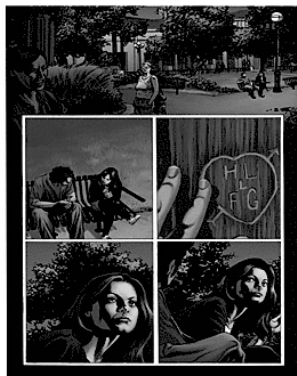
FRAN: I know everyone likes Harold now, you and Stu included, but...I'm afraid he bears Stu a grudge, Larry. Maybe the whole committee—

PANEL FIVE.

Continuing the same exact beat. Pulling back so that we see Larry's face/head on the left, and Frannie on the right. Larry's processing/thinking/going into his own head for a bit. Frannie, trying to suss Larry out. Pull him back from wherever he is.

FRAN: Larry...

FRAN: What is it? What are you thinking?



PAGE SEVEN.

PANEL ONE.

A panel that shows us both of our folks—Larry on the left, Frannie on the right. Larry having a Eureka moment, deducing something a la Sherlock Holmes. Getting kind of excited. Frannie, looking at him warily... In a "What am I missing?" kind of way.

LARRY: It makes such beautiful sense...

LARRY: Harold reads your diary and decides to keep his own...

FRAN: What are you talking about?

PANEL TWO.

Another flashback, Mike. From when Larry went over to Harold's with the wine and the candy bars. (I don't have my back issues handy, but maybe Charlie can help with the reference?) Harold is in the basement—or wherever the hell he is. And Larry is discovering/has discovered the ledger. Is looking down at it.

LARRY: "When I went to visit Harold, he went downstairs to get a corkscrew or something, and I found a ledger hidden under a loose

stone in the hearth.

LARRY: "I didn't read it, but I bet it was—"

PANEL THREE.

Back to the present, focusing on Frannie. Having her own Eureka moment. A penny dropping.

FRAN: Yes! The day I snuck in...

PANEL FOUR.

Another flashback—to the issue in which Frannie went snooping in Harold's house and sat down on the hearth—that panel in which she's startled by Nadine's knocking on the door. (Again, I don't have the specific reference, but do you know the one I mean, Mike?)

FRAN: "...the day Nadine Cross almost caught me, I sat on that hearth... I remember that loose stone..."

PANEL FIVE.

A panel that shows us both of our players, but favoring Frannie, who looks—almost—sick to her stomach. Trying to make sense of all this crazy...

FRAN: As if something had been leading us both by the nose...

FRAN: Lord, it's like we're living in a fairy tale...

FRAN: First an old woman who's the voice of God, now a little boy who's some kind of telepath....



PAGE EIGHT.

PANEL ONE.

Continuous. A panel focusing on Larry. Not a close-up on his face; maybe from the waist-up... Reasoning this through...

LARRY: At the time, I thought the ledger could've belonged to the original owner, full of his dirty secrets, but surely Harold would've found it, and why would he have kept someone else's dirty secrets hidden? Unless—

PANEL TWO.

Continuous. A panel focusing on Frannie, who is getting very hot and bothered by all this— Jumping all over this deduction— Reaching for Larry's hands, excitedly—

FRAN: Unless they were his secrets—

FRAN: Written in Harold's journal—

PANEL THREE.

Continuous. A panel that shows us both of our players, Larry on the left, Frannie on the right. Larry trying to keep cool, keep rational, not to go off the deep-end. Frannie, totally giving over to this idea, her doubts and fears about Harold rising to the surface; she's sure of this, at a deep, core level... She's gripping his hands, tightly, wanting to hear something from Larry, that they'll do something...

LARRY: The ledger could be long gone, Frannie... Or it might be nothing but a list of things to do... Perfectly innocent...

FRAN: Or it could have Harold's master plan.

FRAN: To hurt Stu and/or take over the committee.

PANEL FOUR.

A small, narrow panel. A quick shot of Larry, making the decision. Not relishing the moment, but what else can he say or do...?

LARRY: Well...

LARRY: I think we should go look and see.

PANEL FIVE.

Pulling back for a long shot, looking at Larry and Frannie, still sitting on the stage, huddled close together, heads almost touching... From this distance, they look like almost lovers, or conspirators... Dusk—night— settling around them, fully.

CAPTION: They would...investigate the next day, they decided, while Harold was out with the Burial Committee and Nadine was helping at the power station.

CAPTION: Until they knew something definitively, they wouldn't tell anyone about their suspicions.



PAGE NINE.

PANEL ONE.

Cut to: Frannie and Stu's house. She is walking into the living room, having a private moment, smiling to herself. Happy that she has a plan, at least—and at last.

CAPTION: Frannie felt lighter at heart than she had in weeks. The ledger might prove all her fears groundless. And if it didn't...

PANEL TWO.

Reverse the shot, so that we're looking at the living room from the just-arrive Frannie's POV. AT Stu, sitting on the couch, book (he'd been reading) in his lap. Looking up at Frannie, surprised (frankly) to see her in such a good mood.

CAPTION: ...let the committee decide what to do.

CAPTION: They would discuss it at the next meeting, on September 2nd.

STU: What are you smiling about?

PANEL THREE.

A panel that shows us both of our players, Frannie on the left, Stu on the right. Frannie has joined Stu at the couch, is sitting down on the couch's arm, next to him, draping her arms around him in an intimate, loving gesture.

FRANNIE: I'll tell you tomorrow night. I'll tell you everything that's been on my mind. Until then...no questions, okay?

PANEL FOUR.

The page's biggest panel, Mike. A medium shot. Cutting to a new location: As the caption tells us, the control room of the Boulder Power Station. The same way Marvel has its brain-trust, the Free Zone has its brain-trust, and its all gathered here: Stu, Nick, Ralph, Glen, and electrical guru Brad Kitchner. Brad is rubbing his hands in an anticipatory gesture; he is standing nearest to a couple of large, imposing switches in a control panel... Getting ready to pull them...

FLOATING TEXT: THE NEXT DAY, SEPTEMBER 1st.

FLOATING TEXT: THE CONTROL ROOM OF THE BOULDER POWER STATION.

CAPTION: In attendance: Stu Redman, Nick Andros, Ralph Bretner, Glen Bateman, and engineer Brad Kitchner.



**PAGE TEN.
PANEL ONE.**

A small, narrow panel. Continuing the action from the previous page. Kitchner is pulling the two big switches, saying a silent prayer under his breath, as he does so...

BRAD: Hail Mary, fulla grace, help me win this stock-car race—

CAPTION: —Brad prayed, as he yanked two switches down hard.

PANEL TWO.

Pull back a bit, Mike. In the Control Room, there is a big picture window, looking down, on to a floor with a bunch of huge generators. Like, over twenty generators. But we're focused on two of the generators, surrounded by a group of workers, maybe eight or nine folks, all applauding. A terrific, inspiring moment as the generators rev to life...

CAPTION: In the cavernous hall below them, two generators, serving North Boulder, began to whine. (Brad had said, "If something goes wrong, I'd rather blow two generators than fifty-two.)

CAPTION: The assembled workers broke out into spontaneous applause.

PANEL THREE.

Shifting the focus back on to the guys—the brain-trust. Looking up at them, from, say, the waist-up. They are all smiles, too. Faces filled with wonder. As—as the captions indicate—Nick elbows Stu... They are looking up at the fluorescent lights overhead, which have started to glow. It's like a miracle, almost.

CAPTION: Above them, the fluorescents had begun to glow.

CAPTION: Nick肘bowed Stu. For him, the feeling was the exact opposite of the dread he had known when the lights went out in Shoyo—not one of entombment now, but of resurrection.

PANEL FOUR.

The first in a series of narrow panels running across the bottom of the page. Slice-of-life panels. In this one, we're in a living room, somewhere in North Boulder, looking at a TV

set that is spewing out static and snow...

CAPTION: And all over North Boulder...

CAPTION: TV sets went on in blares of snow...

PANEL FIVE.

Another sliver. Looking at a blender on a kitchen counter as it whirs to life...

CAPTION: In a house on Spruce, a blender whirred to life, mixing a long-congealed cheese-and-egg mixture....

PANEL SIX.

Another sliver: A power saw, plugged into a long extension cord, twisting around/across a concrete floor...

CAPTION: In a garage on Maple, a power saw buzzed sawdust from its guts...

PANEL SEVEN.

The last sliver. Looking at an electrical stovetop. Its burners starting to glow orange...

CAPTION: Stove burners began to glow...



**PAGE ELEVEN.
PANEL ONE.**

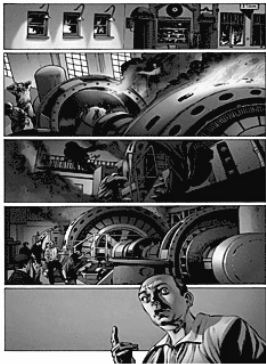
A narrow panel that runs across the top of the page. We're looking at a groovy record shop on Main Street. Above the shop's front door, two speakers are blaring a Marvin Gaye song. (NOTE: This image could, if you want, gently echo the shot from one of our first issues, when Larry heard his song in Times Square.) Tonally, with this image, and the song playing, this is almost a dream-like moment...

CAPTION: Marvin Gaye began to sing from the loudspeakers of an old record shop called the Wax Museum; the words seemed like a dream of the past come to life:

SPEAKER: Let's dance...let's shout...get funky what it's all about...

PANEL TWO.

Cutting back to the power station—to the floor of generators. One of the two operating generators has started to smoke and flame. (NOTE: Since this is the only time we're gonna see the generator aflame, Mike, it's got to have burst into flame suddenly and brightly and, well, bigly.) The gathered workers (who had been applauding) are now looking at it in fear and shock, not knowing what they should do. A moment of panic, illustrating how these folks aren't trained engineers, just warm bodies drafted to help get the Free Zone up and running again.



CAPTION: At the power station, one of the generators started to whine at a higher, more desperate note. It began to smoke, too...

PANEL THREE.

A action panel. We're looking up from the point-of-view of the floor. Brad has raced out of the Control Room, out onto a grated landing that overlooks the generator floor. He is holding the landing's rails with one hand, pointing to the generators with the other, ordering the off-panel workers to leap into action— (Behind Brad, the other members of the brain-trust are racing out on to the landing, as well...)

BRAD: Too high! The bastard's crossing over! Overloading!

BRAD: Get some foam on to that—

BRAD: HUSTLE—

PANEL FOUR.

Time-cutting to: Later. The brain-trust is huddled around that generator. The fire has been extinguished, but it is still smoldering, a bit. Stu is putting a comforting hand on Brad's shoulder as if Brad were upset, but Brad's not; if anything he's totally jazzed (though a bit annoyed with himself, as well). **NOTE:** For variety's sake, though most of the guys are huddled around Stu and Brad, maybe one of them (Ralph) is checking out the generator, examining it.

CAPTION: Once the crisis was over:

STU: I'm sorry it turned out that way, Brad.

BRAD: Sorry? What for?

BRAD: The one generator just overloaded. We're in business, we just got to go around Boulder and turn off everything. We forgot, is all! We forgot!

PANEL FIVE.

A panel focusing on Brad Kitchner—his moment in the sun. He is very excited/excitable in this panel. A "d'oh!" moment, but already moving passed it—on to the next. And oh, by the way, here's something else—Boulder might be on fire! So...that kind of energy. **NOTE:** I think Brad's head should be in the middle of a longish panel, with his first balloon on the left-hand side of the panel, and his second balloon on the right-hand side of the panel...

BRAD: People got sick, they died, but they didn't turn off their electrical appliances before they did! We probably got appliances on, all over Boulder, and that's a hell of a power drain!

BRAD: Matter of fact, we better get some folks over to North Boulder fast and make sure it's not burning down!

PAGE TWELVE.

PANEL ONE.

Cutting to: Harold's house, his living room. Larry and Frannie are standing, huddled around the fireplace/hearth. Larry on the left, Franie on the right. Larry is gripping the loose stone, about to lift it out. A momentous moment between them before he does so; their eyes are locked as they look at each other; moment of truth...

CAPTION: What most people in the Zone remembered about the first of September was that it was the day the power came back on, if only for 30 seconds or so.

CAPTION: Not Frannie and Larry, though.

CAPTION: They remembered it as the day they broke into Harold's house—and everything changed.

LARRY: There's a good chance he's moved the ledger, anyway...

PANEL TWO.

Now we're in the hollowed-out hearth, looking up—through the exposed opening—at Larry and Frannie, whose heads are bent over the hole, as they peer down into the hole, if that makes sense. (Again, I think we're echoing an earlier panel...) Both of them are gulping (literally and/or metaphorically). It all comes down to this.

CAPTION: And Harold had. But Nadine had replaced it.

LARRY: Well...are we going to admire it or read it?

FRAN: You, Larry, I don't even wanna touch it.

PANEL THREE.

Time-cutting to: A beat or two later. A medium-shot, looking at: Larry and Frannie, sitting on the hearth, side-by-side, pouring over the open ledger, which Larry's holding. They are, literally, on the edge of their seats. Worry, obviously, creeping over Frannie's face. (Charlie: Can you confirm this the quote we quote earlier—a few issues back?)

CAPTION: They read:

CAPTION: To follow one's star is to concede the power of some greater Force... Your GOD, your DEVIL, owns the keys to the lighthouse, but to each of us, he has given the responsibility of NAVIGATION... HAROLD EMERY LAUDER

PANEL FOUR.

Zooming in. Looking up at Frannie and Larry's faces, from the POV of...the ledger. Frannie has turned to Larry to address him, but Larry is focused on the journal, already reading (intently) the next entry.

FRANNIE: It's Harold's way of saying following is as honorable as leading. I guess, but as a motto, it's not gonna replace "Waste not, want not"—

LARRY: Whoo, look at this entry, Frannie!

PANEL FIVE.

Pulling back a bit to show us Frannie and Larry reading. A variation on Panel Three, Mike, cropped/staged in whatever interesting way you would like. (Charlie: Ditto this quote, as well.)

CAPTION: She did; they did.

CAPTION: It is said that the two great human sins are pride and hate. Are they? I elect to think of them as the two great virtues. To give away pride and hate is to say you will change for the good of the world. To vent them is more noble; that is to say the world must change for the good of you. I am on a great adventure. HAROLD EMERY LAUDER



PAGE THIRTEEN.

PANEL ONE.

A variation on the previous page's Panel Four, focusing on Frannie and Larry. But Frannie isn't looking at Larry in this panel... She has turned from him a bit, and is looking off, a pit in her stomach... Meantime, Larry is flipping through the journal, back to its start.

FRAN: That's the work of a profoundly disturbed mind...

LARRY: Yeah, it's the kind of thinking that got us into this mess to begin with...

LARRY: How does this "Dear Diary" start, anyway?

PANEL TWO.

A tight close-up on Frannie and Larry's face, favoring Frannie. Both of them going ashen. The bottom falling out. Worst fears confirmed. Frannie, almost unable to process...

CAPTION: They flipped to the book's front; they saw.

FRAN: Oh.

PANEL THREE.

Pull back, Mike, to favor Frannie, who has turned away from Larry and Harold's journal. Sliding away from them both, one of her hands on her stomach, as if she were going to throw-up, which...she might. Larry, on the right-hand side of the panel, closing the journal slowly, also feeling the shock...

CAPTION: Fran felt weak, faint. So this is how the matter of the diaries ended...

CAPTION: (It was as if she'd known it all from the moment she saw Harold's big smudged thumbprint...)

PANEL FOUR.

A panel that frames Frannie on the left, in the foreground, staring into space, in front of her, still holding her swollen, pregnant belly. Larry, on the right-hand side of the panel, in the middle-ground, turned towards Frannie, trying to re-connect with her.

LARRY: Fran, we have to take this and show it to Stu...

LARRY: I don't know if Leo's right about them being on the dark man's side, but at the very least, Harold is dangerously disturbed...

LARRY: Frannie...? You okay...?

PANEL FIVE.

Focusing on Frannie. In a very dark, faraway place. She knew; she knew, dammit... Agreeing with Larry, dimly, deeply, deeply unsettled...

CAPTION: Larry's voice. From far away.

FRAN: Yes...

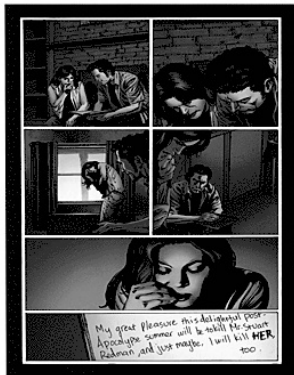
FRAN: Yes...

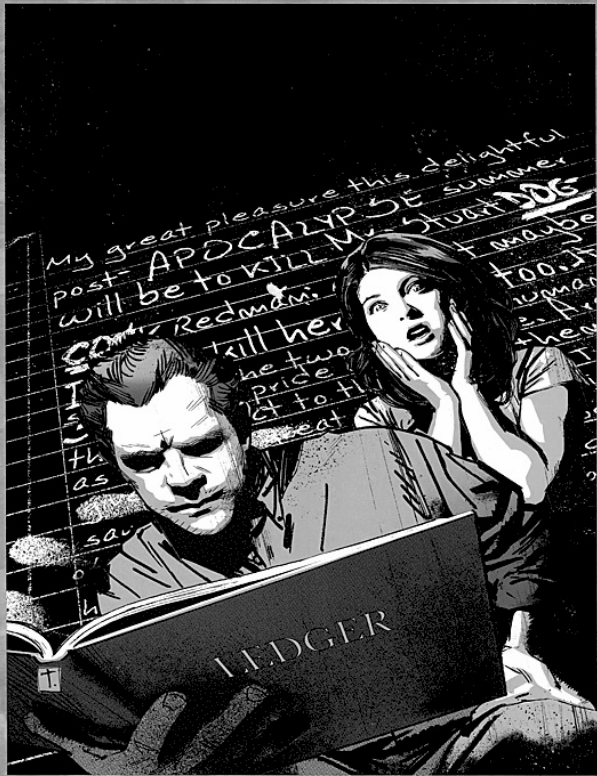
PANEL SIX.

A narrow panel at the very bottom of the page, Mike. A strip of black with two panels. (Or it can be a detail from Harold's journal, whichever you think is more impactful.) But we have to be able to read this clearly:

CAPTION: The first sentence in Harold's ledger:

CAPTION: My great pleasure this delightful post-Apocalypse summer will be to kill Mr. Stuart Redman, and just maybe, I will kill her, too.





Next: "This is Harold Emery Lauder speaking. I do this of my own free will."



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